

day, 6 or 7 days a week. They lived in deplorable conditions, and they were threatened with violence if they didn't comply. These distant relatives, unbeknownst to these children, and these unrelated individuals are a big cause for concern, but not the only one.

Before a child is released into the custody of anyone—a parent, grandparent, aunt, or uncle—this person must be thoroughly vetted by the Federal Government because we simply can't hand a child over to somebody who is going to be a danger to them. There is no vetting requirement, though, for other people who live in the same home. And those of us who have dealt with the scourge of child abuse know that about anybody living in the same home with a minor child—particularly, an unaccompanied child who has undergone the trauma of moving from Central America to the United States is going to be a potential victim.

You can have a trustworthy individual identified as taking care of the child, but abuse could be happening under the roof by another person who lives there. Why do we say that? Because, sadly, it happens all the time. Or, heaven forbid, the parent or the relative is the one who decides to exploit the child themselves.

What is being done to prevent this abuse? As it turns out, not a lot by the Federal Government. The Health and Human Services Department requires safety and well-being check-in calls to be made to sponsors within 30 days after a child has been released. But in 2021 alone, the data shows that 18 percent, nearly one in five children, could not be reached after 30 days. Phone calls were not answered. Door knocks were not responded to. And that means that hundreds of children released to the care of these adults in the United States on our watch are lost to the system. We don't know if they are in a safe home or if they are a victim of trafficking or abuse, or whether they have simply disappeared, whether they have been recruited into a gang. The U.S. Government simply does not know where they are and what is happening to them. This is a national scandal.

Senator SINEMA and I are committed to passing this legislation that provides these critical protections for these children who already have endured a lot of pain and suffering—a lot more than any child should.

Our bill would require criminal background checks, not only for the child's sponsor but for any other adult living in the household. It will bar children from being placed in the custody of anyone who has been convicted of sex offenses, domestic violence, human trafficking, child abuse, or other serious crimes. The U.S. Government simply can't check a box once they have placed a child with a sponsor in the United States. After the initial 30-day checkup, we require another 60-day checkup—as a matter of fact, every 60 days.

Protections for children, streamlined processes, more personnel—these are commonsense reforms that will address the most urgent issues currently on our southern border.

Bipartisanship, as we know, is in short supply these days, especially when it comes to the debate surrounding immigration and border security. We have folks in both parties and in both Chambers of Congress lined up behind this particular bill. I hope we can add more bipartisan cosponsors.

Our bill has already been endorsed by a broad range of law enforcement, immigration, and business groups—for example, the National Border Patrol Council, National Immigration Forum, and U.S. Hispanic Chamber of Commerce. I could go on and on.

As I have said before, and I will say again in closing, if anybody has a better idea, I am all ears. But, right now, all we hear is crickets. No one is offering any bipartisan, bicameral solutions—anything close to what we have described here. This isn't meant to be comprehensive immigration reform. It is a targeted solution to the most urgent problems at hand.

I would be happy to offer this legislation to Vice President HARRIS or President Biden as a solution to the crisis on our southern border. I am happy to meet with them. Senator SINEMA, I am sure, feels the same, and Congressman CUELLAR and Congressman GONZALEZ.

We are interested in fixing the problem, not scoring political points, and we can't afford to wait years or maybe even decades to see the circumstances in Central America change. After all, then-Vice President Biden was tapped to solve this identical problem by President Obama. Let me say that again: Vice President Biden was tapped to solve this identical problem by President Obama. Not only was he unsuccessful, but, as we know, it has gotten worse since that time.

We need urgent action to address the crisis we are experiencing today at our Nation's border and the Bipartisan Border Solutions Act is an important first step.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The senior Senator from Iowa.

INFLATION

Mr. GRASSLEY. Madam President, when I was first elected to Congress in the 1970s, I ran as "Grassley, the inflation fighter." Inflation was about 12 or 13 percent at that time. When I ran for the Senate, it was 12 or 13 percent again, and it hasn't been a major problem since then.

Those who remember that time of high inflation know that it is a time period when inflation was a real problem. It kneecaps middle-class prosperity and causes severe hardships for those already struggling. Inflation is nothing short of a regressive tax, as it hurts Americans more the less money that they have.

It is a stealth tax. With the income tax, you can see how much the government is taking out of your paycheck.

With a sales tax, you can see on your receipt what the government took for its cut. With inflation, the value of the dollar in your pocket is reduced without even leaving your billfold.

When Americans suddenly notice that it costs more to buy the same groceries, it can be hard to know whom to blame. Did the store just decide to raise prices or is inflation caused by mysterious economic forces beyond anyone's control?

In reality, the Federal Government can directly cause inflation by printing too much money to feed its spending habits. Politicians like to promise freebies that someone else will pay for—maybe "the rich" will pay.

Who is "the rich," you might ask. "Don't worry; it is not you," the big spenders assure us.

Well, don't be so sure. President Biden suggested that if rich people pay their fair share of taxes, we can afford to spend another \$4 to \$6 trillion. Now, in reality, if the government confiscated all the wealth of all the U.S. billionaires, it wouldn't cover that bill. Just asking them to pay a little bit more, as the President suggests, will barely make a dent.

So who is going to pay the bill? Don't be fooled. Each American is going to pay that bill. Hard-working Americans will be shouldering the costs of Biden's spending plans in the form of lower wages or higher prices at the gas pump or the checkout lines at Hy-Vee in Cedar Falls, IA.

Remember, prior to the pandemic, tax reform and a more predictable regulatory environment contributed to the best economy America had seen in decades. Yes, prior to the pandemic, as a result of the policies of regulatory reform and of the tax bill of 2017, we did end up with the best economy America had seen in 50 years. Unemployment reached a 50-year low. Family incomes and workers' wages experienced robust gains. In fact, wage growth was strongest for low-wage workers. As a result, income inequality actually declined.

My colleagues across the aisle like to repeat the falsehood that tax reform was just "tax cuts for the rich"—not true. We eliminated loopholes that allowed some favored corporations to avoid millions in taxes. By having more corporations paying their fair share, we were able to lower the overall corporate rate to be more in line with other countries, like Sweden or Denmark.

Tax reform meant more investments in America, creating good-paying jobs for hard-working Americans.

The pre-pandemic thriving economy is poised now to come roaring back if the government just gets out of the way. Raising tax rates while adding new giveaways for Democrats' favored corporations that sign onto the Green New Deal will kill the goose that laid the golden egg.

While President Biden talks a good game about everyone paying their fair share, he is proposing an unprecedented spending binge. This will only

fuel inflation. The burden will fall hard on the middle class and be devastating to low-income Americans.

There are already signs that inflation is starting to kick in. Have you ordered a hamburger at a restaurant lately? I heard from an Iowan in Sioux City that at one furniture store, a particular recliner that sold for \$199 last year now sells for \$249. A leather reclining sofa that sold for \$1,899 last year, today costs \$2,599. Price increases of 25 percent to 37 percent for furniture are impacting the lifestyle of Iowa families and doing it right now.

Many homebuilding supplies have doubled or even tripled in price. This is partly due to the shortage of lumber. I have called on the administration to take action to address this, but the price increases are not limited just to wood products.

President Biden's economic advisers assure us that this inflation Iowans are seeing with their own eyes is just temporary and really nothing to worry about, but it is real and it is happening.

Economists from across the political spectrum are starting to raise alarms. Larry Summers—whom you know as the former president of Harvard, former outstanding economic professor at Harvard, President Obama's chief economist, and also Secretary of Treasury under President Clinton—warned that the \$2 trillion Biden stimulus that was rammed through Congress on a partisan basis was way too big.

Larry Summers is quoted as saying:

I think this is the least responsible macroeconomic policy we've had in the last 40 years.

More recently, in a Time Magazine interview conducted after the release of the President's budget, he expressed concerns this way: "that we are injecting more demand into the economy than the potential supply . . . and that will generate overheating."

When a longtime Democratic economist of the stature of Larry Summers sounds the inflation alarm, the President would be well advised to listen to that alarm. The President's spending plans would dump fuel on an inflation fire that the Fed has ignored in favor of easy money policies geared toward propping up Wall Street.

In the end, the poor and the middle class will pay. Income inequality will rise. For all of their lip service about taking from the rich and giving to the poor, the Democrats' big spending policies may stimulate stock prices for the wealthiest Americans, while everyone else pays more for less.

I suggested in a speech about excess unemployment benefits that politicians should emulate doctors, and you know what doctors are taught: "First, do no harm." That applies to big spending plans when there are signs of inflation. Once inflation starts to run away, it is difficult to stamp out. Remember the decade of the seventies. The Fed would have no choice but to aggressively hike interest rates, which could trigger a recession.

In coming out of a pandemic that has caused so many hardships for American families, the last thing they need is more economic hardship caused by either inflation or a recession. That should give Congress pause.

First, do no harm.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. SMITH). The Senator from Tennessee.

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Madam President, it appears the White House had good reason to wait until the Friday before Memorial Day to release their budget proposal. They couldn't afford a full week's news cycle any more than the American people can afford to fulfill the wish list items President Biden is asking them to pay for. It is a very long list.

I think it is safe to say my Democratic colleagues are trying to make the most of the next year and a half. They know that time is not on their side nor are the American people. There really is something for every faction of the left. Here are a few of the items that are contained in this Biden boondoggle of a budget.

The environmental lobby did a great job these past few months. They are more than taken care of with more electric car subsidies and a \$936 million payout toward environmental justice initiatives.

We also have more funding to expand the Department of Education. If you think that more government is what your child's educational experience has been missing, well, this is the budget for you. Yet, if you are fed up with the way teachers unions have treated children in the classroom, if you are fed up with schools that have been in lockdown, you will want to pay close attention to what I am talking about today.

Apparently, the good people over at the Department of Health and Human Services have time on their hands. Bear in mind, it is your money that is paying them to do the job at which they have time on their hands. Now, they will be switching gears from pandemic response to a new focus on environmental extremism, reparations, and gutting the Second Amendment.

What is in this budget? Bigger government, a higher deficit, and runaway inflation.

What is out? According to this budget, national defense is no longer a priority for the Biden administration or for the Department of Defense. Border security is also on the back burner along with the family-friendly tax policies we implemented under President Trump.

President Biden and the Democrats are doubling down on every mistake they have made so far. Instead of doing their jobs, they are paying lip service to struggling businesses, to struggling stores on Main Street in your hometown, to crumbling bridges—like in Memphis, TN—and roadways, and to future generations of Americans who will come into this world owning their own, personal chunk of our sky-

rocketing national debt. That is right. If you have a child or a grandchild born this year, their share of the national debt is going to be about \$80,000. Think about that.

Think about what has happened to this debt. From President Washington to President George Bush, it was about \$10.6 trillion. During the Obama-Biden years, that debt doubled. Then it was added to through the pandemic. Now one would be led to believe that this administration had decided it was going to take the credit cards and swipe them so many times they would run the numbers off of them.

Yes, this is the Biden surcharge at work—forcing the American people to pay a premium just to live. Cradle to grave, daylight to dark, they have got a list of tax hikes and increased fees for you. You hard-working Americans, you cannot escape it, and what a world they have decided they want to leave for future generations. I think it is awful.

I will tell you what—this budget is such a terrible representation of what America actually needs that, back home in Tennessee, as I was home last week, people would come up to me and ask me if this was really a serious budget. It is so extreme. It is so huge.

They would say: Surely, your Democratic colleagues are not serious about this. Surely, President Biden is not serious about this budget.

Still, my colleagues across the aisle are so eager to get this done that they are prepared to, once again, throw regular order out the window.

My Democratic colleagues are living in an alternate reality. It is the only explanation for why they continue to insist that this country will be better off under a government that strips away your freedoms rather than guarantees them and one that tries to tell you how to live your life every minute of every day—from the time your feet hit the floor in the morning until the time you brush your teeth and get in bed at night.

FOR THE PEOPLE ACT OF 2021

No, Madam President, when it comes to the Biden administration, Big Government is its theme not only of the day but of every day. It is the theme when it comes to spending, to regulations, and even to intrusions into constitutionally mandated State authority.

Before the State work period, the majority leader indicated that he intended to use this month to shove through yet another wish list item. My Democratic colleagues have tried several times to skip debate and sneak through various provisions of their S. 1 election takeover bill. They tried to do this for the same reason President Biden released his disastrous budget on a Friday after everyone had already left town. It is because the bill could not survive a fair news cycle once the American people knew what was in it.

To my Democratic colleagues, remember the American people know—

after we went through ObamaCare and the Affordable Care Act—that the current Speaker of the House had then said: Well, we have to pass this bill so we can read it and find out what is in it.

They know that this is the way you like to operate.

I am sure many of my colleagues on the other side of the aisle would dispute my characterization of the bill. So, for the benefit of the record, let's go through a few of the provisions they are absolutely convinced will somehow expand freedom and secure our elections. This is what you will find in their S. 1 election takeover bill:

It would require States to allow ballot harvesting and no-excuse mail-in balloting, which we know from experience will open the door to fraud. We know this. So are they intentionally trying to open the door to fraud? You are right; people are correct in asking that question.

It would also overrule State-level voter ID laws—another great way to guarantee rampant fraud. So, yes, you heard me correctly. They want the Federal Government to tell your State that you cannot require someone to prove his identity, to show an ID in order to—what?—vote in an election. How about that?

It would weaponize the FEC against minority parties, mandate donor disclosure, and require the Federal Government to match private contributions. You heard me right. They want your tax dollars to fund people who are running for office even if you don't agree with their opinions. Your money would be going to them to match the contributions that they are raising. By the way, it is a 6-to-1 match. Pretty convenient, isn't it?

I call it insanity, and anyone who has ever staffed a polling place or has helped to count ballots knows this. Yet here we are, staring down yet another attempt to put this bill on the fast track—taking away the States' authority to run elections in their States.

Here is what I say to my Democratic colleagues: You are not going to get the benefit of a quiet news cycle on this. America is watching and listening, and they are paying attention.

Your attempts to whip the Senate into a state of partisan warfare over a bill you don't have the votes to pass will not go unnoticed.

Your attempts to make another run at the filibuster and invent a mandate the voters refuse to give you will not go unnoticed.

Your attempt to sneak through this unconstitutional, partisan power grab is not going to go unnoticed. People are paying attention, and my Republican colleagues and I are going to stand up against it. Members of your own caucus have said they will not stand for it.

Most importantly, the American people are watching, they are listening, they are paying attention, and they do not stand for what you are seeking to do.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from New Jersey.

NOMINATION OF JULIEN XAVIER NEALS

Mr. BOOKER. Madam President, I rise today with a lot of joy. I get a chance to speak about someone I have known for decades. I am rising to speak about Julien Neals and my hope that he gets to serve on the U.S. District Court of the great State of New Jersey.

I have spoken to many of my colleagues on the Senate Judiciary Committee about Julien Neals. He is someone I have not just known for a long time, but even though he is not quite my height, I look up to him. We worked together when I was mayor of the city of Newark. So today what I really want to speak about is not simply his impressive career, his distinguished resume, but I really want to talk a bit about who he is.

I am not sure how many of my colleagues know this about the city of Newark, NJ, but when I became mayor in 2006, we inherited a lot of very complex, very serious challenges, and for the sake of our residents, we needed to make change quickly and very urgently. So I brought in this guy named Julien Neals, whom I didn't quite know that well, but he was so well highly recommended.

He moved from the private sector, where he was with a very prestigious New Jersey law firm, and decided to lead the transformation in New Jersey's largest municipal court. He knew that it was a court system that had to change, and he stepped up. He changed it. He changed the way our court operated. He centered it in common community values and made sure that everyone who came before that court was treated in a way that affirmed their dignity, no matter what the matter was.

He pioneered innovations that the whole State—in fact, many places in our Nation—took notice of. He created the first community court in the State of New Jersey, the first youth court, and the first veterans court. He realized that citizens all have, often, different needs, especially folks like our young people and our veterans, and that there is a different way to achieve a larger standard and a larger ideal of justice.

Well, the problem is, when you do so well in one job, you get pushed to another opportunity. I quickly moved him from being my chief judge of New Jersey's largest municipal court to come in and be my corporation counsel in my mayoral administration.

In the wake of the recession in 2008, he became the business manager, the person who runs the city day to day, and under the most difficult, savage of circumstances, he made challenging changes that helped us get through that very difficult period.

Cities all over New Jersey were being crushed financially, making massive amounts of layoffs, and in those financial times, he was able to get our city

to be dramatically more efficient, to bring in new ideas that helped us to create everything from environmental sustainability to expanding access to municipal services to the public. He brought in innovations that became really par for the course all over New Jersey, but Newark did them first.

Today, now, Julien serves as the counsel for the largest county in New Jersey—a county that is bigger than some of our States.

I have had the privilege of knowing Julien, as I have said, now for the past couple decades, and I have watched him handle challenge after challenge, from a global recession to Hurricane Sandy. He has stood in the saddle and helped with calmness, with coolness, with an equipoise that is enviable to all, including me. I have watched him lead. I have watched him care. I have watched his love of others be reflected in the decisions he made under the most difficult of circumstances. I have seen him in crisis after crisis rise not just to meet the challenge but to, in most circumstances, have us come out better off than we were before.

He, in so many ways, is one of the great leaders I have had the privilege of working with in my life. Julien Neals is brilliant. He is thoughtful. He is deliberate in his decision making. He has all of the ideals that I think we want in a Federal judge.

I have to tell you, most importantly to me, I know him. I know his parents. I know his family. I know his kids. He is one of those people who would make you proud not just in knowing but in ascending to a position like a judge. I know he will make us proud in the way that he leads from the bench.

I want to thank President Biden for nominating him. I want to encourage all of my colleagues in a bipartisan way, as I said in the Judiciary Committee, to consider supporting him.

I have had many privileges as a U.S. Senator. God, this is one of those jobs where you have to, like, give glory to God every day for just having the privilege of standing on this floor and getting to be a part of some things that, as much as we rancor back and forth, we should all be proud of, whether it is a global pandemic or just making sure we are funding critical parts of the government where public servants serve. But of all the privileges I have, I have to say this is one of the great ones, the chance to make a man whom I look up to in every way—make him a Federal judge, to try to encourage my colleagues to make him a Federal judge.

I see that my senior Senator, my friend—another guy I look up to even though I got him by an inch or two—has come to the floor, and if the Presiding Officer would allow me, I would like to yield to the senior Senator of the State of New Jersey—more handsome than I am, but I think we are an equal tag team when it comes to serving our State.

I yield the floor with the fear that he does have the microphone last.